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West, Andrew Fleming

The household of  
knowledge

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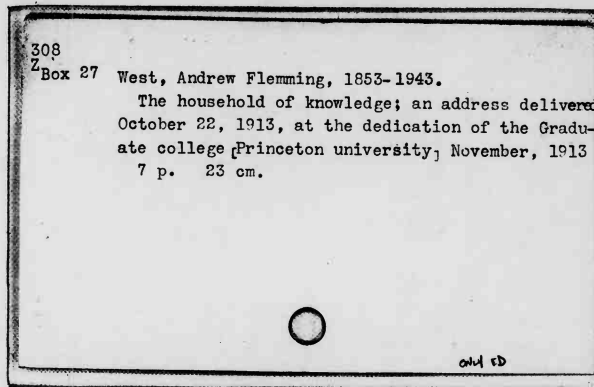
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THE HOUSEHOLD OF KNOWLEDGE

Box

BY

ANDREW FLEMING WEST

308  
Z  
BOX 27

308  
80x27

THE HOUSEHOLD OF KNOWLEDGE

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED OCTOBER 22, 1913

AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

BY

ANDREW FLEMING WEST

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 1913

ms. 31, 1916-18. B

#### THE HOUSEHOLD OF KNOWLEDGE

Everyone who knows academic history is aware that the universities first came into being in the twelfth century as a result of two impulses,—one the new intellectual awakening, the other the instinct for association which suddenly aroused western Europe. The enthusiasm for knowledge, then awakened, would at best have been abandoned to a fitfully interrupted career and in many places would have perished, had it been left homeless. Students might “wander”, but not universities. Like other guilds, the guild of knowledge needed its charter granting secured freedom to teach and learn and also needed its settled abode. Paris, the mother-university of us all, long consisted of residential colleges,—later swept away, indeed, by the Revolution, but in a special and valuable sense reappearing in the École Normale Supérieure, founded by Napoleon, and the Fondation Thiers, which so brilliantly serve the higher thought of France to-day. The old colleges of Oxford and Cambridge—memorable, lovely, appealing—have sheltered the best scholastic life of England for now over seven centuries. There they stand, the oldest college homes in our modern world, and about them the spell of romance has been woven. And in the great German Empire it is keenly gratifying to know that the proposal of the patriot and philosopher Fichte, made so long ago as 1807, is at last to be realized in his loved University of Berlin, premier school of the German-speaking world. So it is with the utmost honor we welcome to-day representatives of this phase of the higher learning in the illustrious universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Paris and Berlin.



It is forty years since Joseph Henry advocated the suggestion of John Miller to establish here a College of Discoverers,—a late reflection of Lord Bacon's august conception of the House of Solomon—and it is nearly forty years since President McCosh introduced graduate studies. It is seventeen years this day since President Patton announced the desire of the newly christened Princeton University to secure this Graduate College. And now it is here ready to exercise its transforming power; a new home for higher investigation and study founded on an old truth attested by centuries of history.

There are obstacles to the accomplishment of our work, and they are also the reasons why the work must be accomplished. Graduate liberal studies ought to set a standard for all other graduate studies in our land. Yet in the judgment of those who may be presumed to know, they are plainly in less satisfactory condition than work done in the better schools of law and medicine. They have been prosecuted with sincerity and energy, but too often without vision. Their tone and quality have been marred by a scattering and uncertain preliminary schooling, by mediocrity of mind, by the worship of degrees as a means of securing positions, by the isolation of students due to an estrangement of special from general knowledge, by reliance on the mechanism of rules rather than on the free movement of the human mind in study, by a curiously persistent illiteracy and by lack of proper provision for the student's physical and social welfare. Moreover, in many ways graduate studies are not adjusted to the inexorable and often reasonable demands of the student's intended career. Something is lacking. That something cannot be stated in a word, but it is something which calls for harmony between the student's work and his whole life, personal, professional and

social,—here in his studies, and later out in the world. It also calls for clear excellence as the one necessary standard for all his attempts.

In some degree the obstacles will probably always exist and they cannot be removed merely by opposing them. They can be removed only by replacing them with something better. A positive force must enter and operate in the students themselves, a force not of compulsion, but of attraction. What we are seeking is to be found in the daily fellowship of kindred minds of rare promise, generous rivalry and high aspiration, the communion which reveals the unity of knowledge, the irresistible *flam vitale* that comes with the full swing and rush of intellectual freedom among comrades. Do we realize what fire the friendship of knowledge may kindle in a circle of young scholars? It is an old master, a supreme artist in thought, Augustine, once the central figure in such a group of students, whose words still glow as he depicts the scene: "Converse amid cheer and kindness, anon the reading of enchanting books, difference without dislike (as though one in casual dissent from himself were preparing for many close consents), one learning from the other and again teaching him, wishing for the absent and hailing their return; and thus by a thousand pulses and signals of the heart, revealed in look and speech, setting every mind ablaze and blending many in one."

So we make our appeal directly to young men, young in spirit, rich in mental and moral store, quick in response to studious impulse, eager to seek and find, able to perceive, take and use the more valuable instead of the less valuable material of knowledge, open eyed to ideas in their relevancy, worth and beauty, pulsing with energy, inventiveness and fantasy, men companionable, magnanimous and free. We are seeking to liberate and use in a society of such students an inner motive

power which is sure to stir them profoundly. It is not reason and knowledge alone, but shining through these the awakened imagination and affections. It is these that will lead the student not only to know the best in the best way, but also unconsciously to become himself better than what he knows. Environed by others in like mood, this inner driving impulse makes him aim at ever-increasing excellence, seeking not only to do his best, but perchance even the best that can ever be done, and done rigorously, incessantly and joyously. Here is real scholarship, the work of real men. These are the sons of knowledge, worthy to dwell together in her home. It is in such a place, full of endeavor and filled with friendship, the glorious saying of Aristotle will be fulfilled: "Pleasure perfects labor, even as beauty crowns youth." To such a fellowship in studies,—rich, deep, ever-developing—Princeton invites all who can live this life in such a home, assured that when they leave it they will take with them doubled and trebled power.

No doubt educated men should be intelligent. They ought to think, of course. Yet thinking is not knowing. So they ought to do something more: they ought to know, and even to know what is best worth knowing. They ought also to master some one part of knowledge completely, and to add to it for the increase of knowledge, in order to guide their fellow-men. To this end they ought to be able to "dwell together in unity" with all who seek valuable knowledge, wheresoever it is to be found. And as their thought, slowly growing surer and purer, guides them on and on into wiser knowledge, so in every instance their growing knowledge, whether of acquisition or discovery, should lead them together unerringly to truth, and to the one truth in which all separate truths, however seemingly estranged, somehow and somewhere find their reconciliation and unity. Herein I hope will be the crowning

glory of this household of knowledge. For our universities are a creation of Christendom, and long ago Princeton learned to believe in God as the end of all our knowing and in Christ as the Master of the Schools. In the western window of Procter Hall we have tried to write this truth in symbols of light and color. And the two sentences there inscribed in a silent ancient language may well be uttered in our own tongue as the summary of our faith. The one tells the scholar's spirit: "And be ye not called masters, for one is your master, even Christ." The other tells the scholar's reward: "They that instruct many in righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."



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